

Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. has extended formal invitations to 21 Will County municipalities to join the Abraham Lincoln National Airport Commission (ALNAC).

"I want to be clear to you that there is a seat on the Commission reserved for you and your municipality. It has always been my position that ALNAC should include as many Will County municipalities as wish to join, including yours," Jackson wrote to the mayors on February 17.

"ALNAC and the developers seek a broad-based Commission so that all municipalities and residents who will be impacted by and served by this airport also will have a voice in its development and operations," Jackson wrote.

"Our developers and Commission want participation from all affected municipalities whose collective responsibility is to shape and manage a successful airport that serves and is responsive to everyone's needs and concerns," Jackson said.

"In short, they believe that the best governance is one that allows all interested parties to have a seat at the table (and) that provides decentralized political stability and autonomy," he wrote.

In the letter, Jackson also noted that ALNAC was the duly constituted under Illinois state law more than a year ago and that airports in Illinois and across the country typically are run by municipalities, not counties.

"In Illinois, airports are almost always functions of municipal government, not county government. For example, Chicago runs O'Hare and Midway, not the Cook County Board. Joliet Park District runs Joliet Regional Airport, not the Will County Board. The City of Rockford runs Greater Rockford Airport, not the Winnebago County Board," he wrote.

Jackson noted that currently seven airports operate within Will County, yet the Will County Board has no seat on any of those airport commissions. Four Will County municipalities -- University Park, Park Forest, Steger and Sauk Village -- belong to ALNAC.